



Customer relations a top priority for small business success

Build loyalty by visiting clients, delivering on time, paying attention to detail, being upbeat and honest

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In this fast-paced world, many professionals and organizations are so focused on short-term goals, they have forgotten one of the most important success factors: *People buy relationships, not products or services.*

If you ignore your customers, they won't be a customer for long. It can be a big challenge when you are dealing with monthly quota goals, internal politics, investors, organizational changes and a deluge of e-mail and voice-mail requests. You must make customer relations a top priority.

Connecting with customers on a personal and professional level will build strong relationships and long-lasting loyalty.

Here are some proven tips for building strong relationships:

- Reduce customer stress: The easier it is for customers to do business with you, the greater the likelihood they will consummate the sale and come back. A long, complex selling process will turn off customers and send them to your competitors.
- Pay attention to detail: Customers make a direct connection between attention to detail and competence. Pay attention to such details as sales terms, credit, discounts, display of merchandise, personal appearance and dress.
- Do a road show: Nothing beats going into the field and meeting customers face to face to better understand their needs and show them what your company has to offer.
- "Over deliver": Create a pattern of superior dependability by delivering on time, without order error and unfailing quality of products/services.
- Honesty is the best policy: Be straightforward and honest in all your customer relationships. Never over-promise or compromise your principles for the sake of a sale. It is self-defeating.
- Stay upbeat: Keep your tone and demeanor positive. Make it a point to elevate the moods of people around you. Hearing your name should elevate their mood. Customers prefer to buy from people they like. Help them feel good about themselves.
- Don't knock the competition. It accents the negative. Rather show why your products/services epitomize quality, value and performance at a fair price. It will pay dividends.

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If you would like more information on this or other business-related subjects, contact Akron SCORE via the Internet at <http://akronscore.org> or by calling 330-379-3163. Services are free and confidential. SCORE is a resource partner of the U.S. Small Business Administration.